The object of this caring science thesis is to deepen the understanding of the human being by describing what an encounter with a person with intellectual disabilities can imply. The research question is about what is unique in the encounter with a person with intellectual disabilities. The thesis has a caring science perspective according to the tradition that has been developed at ÅA in Vasa and is thus based in human sciences and hermeneutics.

The result of a systematical literature study, based on twelve scientific articles, as a rational level according to Ödman, forms questions for the next structural level in the hermeneutic understanding. This level consists of empirical triangulation, theme interviews, diary notes and a group interview and is inductively interpreted by a qualitative content analysis. At the next methodological level, the existential level, the new contextual understanding meets caring science knowledge, and finally returns to the focus dimension, in other words the study’s ontological perspective.

The result shows that that which is true and genuinely human shows itself with stronger contours in people with intellectual disabilities. Courage to dare to be yourself and to show yourself in openness and love, seems to especially emerge in this given context. The encounter is universal and timeless and not dependent on intellectual capacity. This new understanding portrays the encounter through time, communion, joy, wonder, life and a “zest for life”.